1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

487
516
648

PLATE IV. Villagers hoeing a path to another village in preparation for a visit from the District Officer.

648
634
342
516
137

PLATE V. A District Officer, with a county chief on his left, talks to village headmen during a tour of villages. In the distance are villagers listening to the conversation.

[Facing p. 145]

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

I

Ngoniland and the People who lived in it

The homeland

The little country of Nyasaland in Central Africa received its name from the lake by which Livingstone and those who followed him penetrated into the interior and reached the lands and people living round the lake. On the west side there is a narrow strip of low-lying coastal land. Then a series of escarpments begin, and up them roads and paths wind through steep wooded valleys, until the final scarp leads to the grasslands of the high plateau. Here on the high plateau the Ngoni settled about the middle of the nineteenth century, after nearly forty years of trekking from Natal to Tanganyika. They turned south again at the shores of Lake Victoria and returned to this land which they had passed through on their northward march. This high plateau has great diversity of scenery, and much of it reminded the Ngoni of the hills and valleys and grasslands of Natal. There are high mountains with sharp peaks and massive granite shoulders. Between the ranges of lower grass-covered hills are shallow valleys where the rain washes down good soil to the valley bottoms. Sweeps of grassland, bare of trees, alternate with river valleys where there is a continuous flow of water, fed by springs and mountain streams.

In the dry season, from April to November, the trees lose their leaves and the grass gradually dries up till the prevailing colours are gold and brown against the black and grey

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

rocky outcrops. In September, several weeks before the rains begin, the trees burst out into red foliage, making scarlet rings and patches around the mountains and along the valleys, while through the hard-baked earth spring gladioli and orchids. This is the time of the bush fires when grass is burned and men and boys go hunting. The first rain storms bring a transformation. Fresh green grass covers the land, and scarlet leaves turn bright green on bushes and trees, and later marigolds turn the hillsides golden and yellow arums and red-hot pokers appear along the roadsides.

In making this high plateau their home, the Ngoni chose it primarily for the pasture lands for their cattle. They sited their villages on the ridges or the slopes of the hills, where they had a commanding position, with access to water, good land for cultivation in the shallow dips and river valleys, and woodlands where they could cut poles for their houses and cattle kraals.

The traditional Ngoni village was built in a horse shoe formation round a circular cattle kraal. Larger villages had a central kraal with huts round it, and several other kraals each with its horseshoe grouping of huts. A large village, and there were many of over a hundred huts, seemed at first sight to be a sprawling collection of huts and kraals, with a few tall trees about and several red ant-hills. A pattern of hut sites became apparent, however, once the family and kinship grouping was known. Behind each hut was one or more circular grain stores built on platforms, large ones for maize and smaller ones for millet or ground-nuts. In the Central Ngoni kingdom, and sometimes in the Northern kingdom, there were tall reed fences round the huts of leading families, enclosing an open space where household work went on, and wood and grass were stored.

There were two focal points in each village, reproduced on a minor scale in the hamlets round each kraal. One was the 'big house'[1] at the head of the kraal, where the leading woman had her home.

4: Barnes I-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

342
137
291
516

I. Preparing meat for a gall-bladder ceremony. The leader of the bride's party sits on the left with her helper while the meat is cut up by the master of ceremonies.

342
285
291
516
585

II. Bride kneeling on mat outside her husband's mother's hut. Standing behind her are the three women of her party.

[Facing P. 126]

7: Hodgson G-5 (1926) 1933 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

plain is a moderately temperate, undulating plateau, standing from 3,000 to 5,000 feet above sea-level and broken by ranges of mountains whose peaks tower several thousand feet higher.

The Dowa District is situated in the centre of the Protectorate. Its area of 2,400 square miles is divided topographically into three nearly equal parts, the alluvial lake-shore plain on the east giving way to the escarpment of the hilly plateau in the centre, which again drops steeply on the west to another plain extending to the banks of the Bua River. Each plain is well covered with light timber and long grass, and contains a plentiful supply of all local varieties of game. Tsetse have long infested the lake shore; on the west, migrating from Rhodesia, they crossed the Bua as recently as 1914 and have now spread as far as the hills. The central plateau is cool and healthy. Formerly well timbered, it has since been denuded by the wasteful methods of the native inhabitants. It is free from tsetse and mosquitoes, and cattle thrive in consequence. The larger species of game are absent.

2. *Sociological Introduction.*

The census of 1926, taken at the time when these notes were compiled, shows the population of the District as consisting of 57,184 Achewa,[1] 38,244 Angoni, 93 Anyanja and 4,627 Wayao, together with an odd thousand belonging to other tribes. The Achewa live principally in the west and centre, the Angoni on the central plateau, and the Anyanja and Wayao on the lake shore. The same census gives a total of 247,000 Angoni and 470,000 Anyanja and Achewa out of 1,200,000 natives then settled in the Protectorate.

The two last-named tribes taken together are numerically the largest in Nyasaland, and they have probably lived in their present habitat longer than any others; but the exact duration of their residence can only be a matter for conjecture, since the history of the southern Bantu peoples, during the last four centuries at any rate, consists of one long series of migrations and invasions. From time to time clans and tribes have been united under a strong and powerful leader, and a few decades later disintegration has set in and they have almost vanished. New names have frequently been adopted, and few tribes in south-east Africa now bear the same designation and occupy the same ground as did their ancestors four hundred years ago. Oral tradition is supplemented but scantily by the reports of the early Portuguese explorers, who first ascended the Zambezi River at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Their objects were commercial rather than scientific, and they have left little record of the native peoples with whom they came in contact.

It is known, however, that the Achewa and Anyanja are off-shoots or descendants of the A-maravi, who inhabited the country north of the Zambezi at Sena and Tete in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In his Report upon the Rivers of Cuama (Zambezi) compiled in 1667 Father Manuel Barreto states that this warlike tribe was governed by its emperor, named Carongo, whose kingdom extended two hundred leagues up the river from the port of

[1] Tribal names in Nyasaland generally take the plural prefix A-, as A-ngoni, A-chewa, sometimes Wa-, as Wa-yao. The singular prefix is M-, as Mngoni, Myao. Further south, Abe-, Aba- and Ama- are more common, *e.g.* Abe-Ngoni, Aba-Mbo, Ama-Ndwandwe. For the sake of convenience, when there is no danger of confusion between prefix and stem, I have omitted the hyphen.

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

The present-day population of the tribe is about 85,000, of whom about 60,000 live in Northern Rhodesia and 25,000 in the Fort Manning area of Nyasaland.[1] In Northern Rhodesia the tribe is largely confined in two demarcated Native Reserves. In 1938 the density of population in these two reserves averaged 68 persons to the square mile,[2] but in some congested or very fertile areas it was 90 or more.[3] Since 1941 the density has been reduced in some of the more congested parts by controlled resettlement in areas outside the reserves.[4] The density of population of the Nyasaland section of the tribe was about 46 persons to the square mile in 1945.[5]

The region in which the Ngoni live consists of a fairly flat plateau about 3,500 feet above sea-level, with massive granite outcrops rising another 1,000 feet or more. The soils of the region are principally of the types suitable only for shifting or partial cultivation, but there are also belts of more valuable soils.[6] In relation to the customary mode of agriculture, in which maize is the principal crop, the critical density of the land has been calculated to be about 22 persons to the square mile.[7] The annual rainfall at Fort Jameson varies from 27 to 48 inches, averaging about 35 inches. The region contains the meeting of the Luangwa–Nyasa and Luangwa–Zambezi watersheds. Most of the streams that flow down into the Luangwa dry up in July, while the Zambezi and Nyasa streams continue to flow somewhat longer.[8]

The natural vegetation of the region consists principally of *Brachystegia–Isoberlinia* woodlands, with larger trees along the lines of streams. The mean maximum temperature for the region is about

of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. This account was prepared at Oxford, and I am very grateful to Dr. Max Gluckman for criticism of this paper in draft.

[1] In the 1945 Nyasaland census many of the people living in the two Ngoni counties were classified as Cewa. Hence the figure of 5,531 Ngoni in Fort Manning does not represent the total population of these two counties. Cf. *Report on the Census*, Table 4.

[2] Calculated from the figures given in the *Pim Report*, p. 364. These two reserves contain Cewa chieftainships as well as Ngoni, but the average population density of the two tribes is probably of the same order.

[3] Trapnell, *Ecological Survey*, p. 72.

[4] Fraser, *Land Resettlement*, pp. 47–9.

[5] *Report on the Census*, Table 8. The Fort Manning District contains a Cewa chieftainship as well as the two Ngoni. The figure given above is the average for the whole district.

[6] Trapnell, *Ecological Survey*, p. 72.

[7] Allan, *African Land Usage*, p. 14.

[8] Poole, *Human Geography*, pp. 1 and 2.